

EXT. FOREST CAMP - EVENING

SIMON sits on a folding stool on the edge of camp. MASON finishes dressing the last of SIMON's wounds. The distance between them is bridged only by MASON's professionalism.

MASON

There... You should rest at camp for a few days before heading out again.

SIMON

Right. Thanks... Say, Mas, do you-

MASON

No.

SIMON

Mas, please. The others, they're... just, treating me strangely.

MASON sighs and shakes his head.

MASON

Can you blame them?

SIMON

I did what I-

MASON

Stop... Just... take it easy the next few days...

MASON helps SIMON rise from the stool.

MASON

And give Miln her space, Sime. She's a kid... She might always be a kid.

SIMON

...Thanks, Mase.

MASON

Yeah. Go get some dinner.

SIMON makes his way towards the centre of the camp as MASON cleans his hands in a plastic basin. A fire roars beneath a pot suspended by a tripod of sticks.

RANE, tending the pot, squats on the opposite side of the campfire to SIMON, staring at him coldly through the flames. She shakes her head with reproach.

VINNY stands awkwardly by the side of his tent, holding a woodaxe. He sets a log upon a stump and swings down upon it. It splits. He smiles proudly to himself, then catches SIMON's gaze. He offers him a meek, static wave.

MILN sits alone in front of her. She scribbles innocently into a colouring book, seemingly unaffected by the loss of her brother.

SIMON decides what to do.

[Eat with Rane.](#)

[Approach Vinny.](#)

[Approach Miln.](#)

MARC FRENCH

RANE's eyes track SIMON as he takes a seat by the campfire.

SIMON

Smells good. What is it?

RANE

You a fuckin' idiot or something?

SIMON

What the-? I meant that genuinely, Rane.

RANE

When the fuck have you ever said our food 'smells good'? It smells like fuckin' dog food because- Why am I even explaining this? You're a fuckin' idiot, Simon.

SIMON

Well, *sorry* for complimenting your cooking.

RANE puts down the ladle, glaring at SIMON.

SIMON

Sorry, I- I don't know why I said that.

RANE returns to stirring the stew.

SIMON

You holding up, okay?

RANE

Yeah. Just...

RANE grits her teeth.

RANE

It's tough convincing myself you're not a fuckin' monster, Simon.

SIMON

I know.

RANE

I can't even tell if I believe you, y'know?

SIMON

I was telling the truth.

RANE

You fuckin' hated the kid.

SIMON
I didn't hate-

RANE
Don't argue with me, Simon; you hated the kid. Yeah, I get it, he was stupid, arrogant, fuckin' stole from you. I get it. But... fuck, Simon.

SIMON
It was him, or both of us, Rane.

RANE
You fuckin' come back with more food than we know what to do with, your guts hanging out of you-

SIMON
It wasn't that bad-

RANE
Don't fucking argue with me, Simon!... And you tell us that... you were the one to outrun 'em? Tsk.

SIMON
Manny's bag was full, too.

RANE
Kid was fast, Simon. Not to mention half your fucking age.

SIMON
He tripped, I don't know. I told you, I- just... glanced back, and he was gone.

RANE
You didn't fuckin'... sell him?

SIMON
Rane! Fuck. No, I didn't sell him.

RANE
Shit, Sime... I wish I could change how I feel... He was a kid... and to be honest... I just don't trust you.

SIMON
I'm not one of them.

RANE.
...You were.

SIMON

Not... not out of choice. What do you think they'd do to me if I just said, "Actually, I disagree with all this!" It just... wasn't that simple, Rane.

RANE bites her tongue, then sighs. She pours a ladle of the stew into a cup.

RANE

Here.

SIMON

Thanks.

END SCENE.

MARC FRENCH

VINNY sees SIMON approach. He puts the head of the axe on the ground and leans on its shaft. He smiles awkwardly before losing balance and abandoning his pose.

SIMON

You're getting better at that.

VINNY

Thanks. Mason's a good teacher.

SIMON

Yeah. Not sure where we'd be without him.

VINNY

Yep.

The two avoid eye contact in an uncomfortable moment of silence.

SIMON

You believe-

VINNY

I'm sorry that-

VINNY

Oh! Sorry I-

SIMON

Shit. You go fir-

SIMON

Not at all-

VINNY

No, it's nothi-

They share a painful laugh that does nothing to ease the tension.

SIMON

You go.

VINNY

Uh. Okay. I guess I'm sorry that everyone's giving you a hard time.

SIMON

...You are?

VINNY

Yeah.

SIMON

You believe me?

VINNY

No, it's just-

SIMON

Wait. You *don't* believe me?

VINNY

Uh. I mean. I just don't think it matters.

SIMON

What?

VINNY

Y'know. If you're lying or not.

SIMON

I'm not lying, Vinny.

VINNY

Oh-okay. Sure. I just...

(speaking under his breath)

I just think... Rane's... overreacting.

SIMON

...Uh, thanks.

VINNY

(speaking under his breath)

I think you did us a favour, honest.

SIMON

What the fuck are you talking about?

VINNY

(speaking under his breath)

Guys like Manny... they get guys like you and me killed. You made the right call. I wish Rane could see that.

VINNY chuckles to himself before preparing another log to split.

I mean... that food's going to last us months... I'd never say that in front of her, though... she's a fucking... freak of nature, man.

VINNY chuckles again, bringing the axe and splitting the log.

SIMON

Punch him.

**Say you didn't trade
Manny for food**

Let it go

SIMON's right knuckles collide with VINNY's jaw. VINNY makes a strange, guttural noise as he flies to the ground, his axe falling next to him. RANE abandons her pot of stew and rushes over

RANE

(shouting)

What the fuck, Simon!?

SIMON

He- He said I killed Manny!

RANE squares up to SIMON.

RANE

Who the fuck cares!?! You can't just fuckin' punch him!

VINNY murmurs in pain. Blood leaks from his mouth.

RANE

Oh fuck! MASON! GET THE FUCK OVER HERE!

SIMON

I'll go-

RANE

No! You get the fuck out of my sight before I-

MILN approaches, head tilted in confusion.

MILN

What happened to Vinny?

SIMON goes to speak. RANE shuts him up.

RANE

No! Get out... Now.

SIMON opens his mouth to defend himself.

RANE

No! You do not get to argue with me right now! Leave.

MILN

Vinny's bleeding, Rane.

RANE

MASON!?

MASON
(distant)
COMING!

SIMON obeys RANE and walks away from the scene. SIMON and MASON pass each other.

MASON
What in the world did you do?

END SCENE.

MARC FRENCH

SIMON

Vinny. I wasn't lying. I-I didn't see what happened, but... I didn't trade Manny for the food.

VINNY sighs. He puts the axe back down and shrugs.

VINNY

I told you. It doesn't matter...

VINNY stares at SIMON with disappointment.

I wish we could trust each other a bit more, Sime.

SIMON

I'm telling the-

VINNY

Hey. I gotta get this wood cut for Rane... Could you give me some space?

SIMON

Vinny-

VINNY

Seriously, Sime.

SIMON stares at VINNY in disbelief. VINNY returns the stare, and SIMON sees that VINNY has grown in confidence, no longer the unsure teen he once was.

SIMON

..Yeah. Sure.

SIMON turns away and walks towards the campfire. It appears RANE has retired to her tent for the night. SIMON pours his own bowl of stew.

END SCENE.

SIMON

Sure, Vinny... Look, I'm going to get a bowl of whatever Rane's cooked up.

VINNY

Cool. Rane said I've gotta get through all this wood first, so I'll catch you later.

SIMON

Alright.

SIMON begins to leave.

VINNY

Hey, Sime.

SIMON

Hm?

VINNY

People like us, we've got to stick together. Trust each other.

SIMON

People like us?

VINNY

People who know how to make the tough calls.

SIMON and VINNY share an intense stare. SIMON recognises a new confidence in VINNY, who is no longer the unsure teen he once was.

SIMON

Uh. Yeah. Sure.

VINNY

Have a good night.

SIMON

You too.

SIMON turns away and walks towards the campfire. It appears RANE has retired to her tent for the night. SIMON pours his own bowl of stew.

END SCENE.

SIMON passes RANE. RANE gives him a look of disgust.

RANE
You fuckin' kidding me, Sime?

SIMON takes a seat next to MILN. She smiles up at him for a second before returning to her colouring book.

SIMON
You doing okay, Miln?

MILN
Mhm!

SIMON
I'm... I'm sorry bout Manny.

MILN pauses her scribbling for the slightest of moments.

MILN
It's okay. These things happen. And you brought so much food home.

SIMON
No- Damnit... I know it must be... hard to understand.

MILN
I understand, don't worry.

SIMON is tortured by a mixture of guilt and frustration.

I'm sorry that Rane's so mad at you.

SIMON
It's fine. She... she has her reasons.

MILN
Hmm... Maybe. I'm not mad at you, though. So, she shouldn't be. He was my brother.

SIMON
It's not so simple, Miln.

MILN
Really? Why?

SIMON realises he has no answer to her question.

SIMON

Rane... she has a reason not to believe me.

MILN

Because you used to be a slaver?

SIMON is stunned by the girl's bluntness.

SIMON

..Yeah. Yeah, I was.

MILN

Simon, can I ask you something?

SIMON

Yeah, of course.

MILN

Do you feel guilty?

SIMON

Tell her you don't.

Tell her you do.

MARC FRENCH

SIMON

No... No, Miln, I don't... Because it wasn't my fault.

MILN

Mhm! That's what I told Rane.

SIMON

..Rane spoke with you about Manny?

MILN

Yep! And I told her, "If Simon doesn't feel guilty, that's because it wasn't his fault!"

SIMON

And... what did Rane say?

MILN

That I wouldn't understand because I'm eleven.

SIMON

That's not nice of her.

MILN

Yeah... but you sort of said that too.

MILN smiles up at her SIMON.

SIMON

Heh... I guess I did... You're smarter than we take you for.

MILN

Yep.

SIMON

Oh. Heads up. She's coming over.

RANE marches over towards SIMON and MILN.

RANE

(seething)

You wanna come go grab dinner with me, Miln?

MILN returns her attention to her colouring book.

MILN

No thanks, Rane. I'm not hungry.

RANE is taken aback.

RANE
You really-

MILN
No thanks.

RANE
(seething)
Okay... Well, Simon, why don't you come grab a bowl?

SIMON looks between RANE and MILN.

SIMON
...Yeah... I should. Nice chatting, Miln.

MILN
Mhm.

RANE and SIMON begin to leave together.

MILN
(speaking up)
Rane?

RANE and SIMON turn to face MILN.

RANE
Yeah?

MILN
You should stop being angry with Simon.

RANE and SIMON are made speechless. RANE turns them both back around. They walk towards the campfire.

RANE
(under her breath)
The fuck did you tell her?

SIMON
The truth.

SCENE ENDS.

SIMON
Yeah... Yeah. I do.

MILN looks at SIMON, surprised.

MILN
Why?

SIMON
Because... because he died under my care.

MILN
But... it wasn't your fault, right?

SIMON
No... but... I still feel... responsible.

The colouring book has lost MILN's attention.

MILN
I don't get it.

SIMON
Well... I guess neither do I.

MILN is upset with this response.

MILN
I think that's really stupid.

SIMON stutters.

SIMON
Well... these things aren't so simple-

MILN
Stop saying that!

SIMON
But, Miln, it's true.

MILN
How can you say that when you don't even understand it! That makes
no sense.

SIMON
It just-

MILN

No! You and Rane always treat me like I don't know anything!

SIMON

W-wait. You and Rane talked already?

MILN

Leave me alone.

SIMON

What did you and Rane talk about?

Without either of them realising, RANE stands before them, sneering at SIMON.

RANE

Why don't you leave the girl alone, Simon?

MILN

Yeah. I don't want to talk to either of you.

RANE

You heard the girl.

SIMON

Wait. Miln. It's just-

MILN

Go away!

RANE

Simon.

SIMON sighs in defeat. He rises. RANE leads him to the campfire.

RANE

The fuck you think you're doing? Talking to her like that?

SIMON

Could ask you the same question.

RANE

I didn't fuckin' kill her brother, did I?

SIMON

I didn't-

RANE

Don't fuckin' care what you have to say. Leave her the fuck alone.

SIMON takes a seat by the fire. RANE doesn't.

SIMON

Are you not going to eat?

RANE

Going to bed. Pour your own fuckin' bowl.

END SCENE.

MARC FRENCH